

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09

H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8984

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TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: COMMUNIST CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS AT TONLE CHAM AND
RACH BAP

SUMMARY. FOLLOWING IS BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON COMMUNIST
CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS INVOLVING ATTACKS ON GVN -; HELD POSITIONS AT
TONLE CHAM (TAY NINH PROVINCE) AND RACH BAP (BINH DUONG
PROVINCE. THESE ARE PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS COMMUNIST VIOLATIONS
OF CEASEFIRE, AS POSITIONS INVOLVED HAVE LONG BEEN IN GVN HANDS AND
THEY CONTROL THE MOST USED MILITARY APPROACH TO SAIGON.

ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO UTILIZE THIS
INFORMATION IN BACKGROUNDEERS FOR THE PRESS AND IN TALKS WITH OTHER
GOVERNMENTS. WE PLAN TO DRAW ON IT IN ANSWERING INQUIRIES
FROM LOCAL PRESS CORPS.

1. FOLLOWING IS BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON COMMUNIST CEASEFIRE
VIOLATIONS INVOLVING ATTACKS ON TONLE CHAM AND RACH BAP. THESE
TWO EPSISODES, AMONG THE VERY LARGE NUMBER OF COMMUNIST ATTACKS
ON GVN POSITIONS IN VIOLATION OF THE CEASE- FIRE, ARE PARTICULARLY
DANGEROUS, AS THEY ARE LOCATED AT THE APPROACHES TO THE
TRADITIONAL
RGIVER INFILTRATION CORRIDOR LEADING TO SAIGON. THE ATTACKS, RE-
PEATED OVER THE PAST TEN DAYS, ARE A MATTER OF VERY SERIOUS CON-
CERN TO GVN.

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2. CONTINUING COMMUNIST ATTACKS ON THE GVN POSITIONS AT TONLE CHAM (NORTHEAST TAY NINH PROVINCE) AND AT RACH BAP (ABOUT 8 KM. SE OF EN CAT IN BINH DUONG PROVINCE), IN VIOLATION OF THE CEASE- FIRE, HAVE PRESENTED A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE PEACE. THE GVN FORMALLY PROTESTED TO THE FPJMC ON THE ISTUATION AT THE TWO POSITIONS ON MARCH 17. THE DRV AND PRG DELEGATIONS REFUSED TO AGREE TO A JMC INVESTIGATION OF THE FIGHTING. THE GVN ASKED THE ICCS ON MARCH 17 TO INVESTIGATE THE SITUATION AT THE TWO POSTS, AND THE US SUPPORTED THE GVN REQUEST IN A LETTER TO THE ICCS ON MARCH 18. THE ICCS, AT A PLENARY MEETING ON MARCH 19, AGREED TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CEASE- FDIRE VIOLATIONS OF WHICH THE

GVN HAS COMPLAINED. ALL INDICATIONS POINT TO THE FACT THAT THE AT-TACKING FORCES AT BOTH LOCATIONS ARE REGULAR UNITS OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY.

3. THE TONLE CHAM RANGER CAMP WAS ORIGINALLY BUILT BY US SPECIAL FORCES PERSONNEL IN JANUARY- FEBRUARY, 1967, AND HAS BEEN CON-TINUOUSLY OCCUPIED BY US AND GVN UNITS SINCE THAT TIME. IT WAS CLEARLY UNDER GVN CONTROL AT THE TIME OF THE CEASE- FIRE ON JANUARY 28, 1973. BEGINNING ON MARCH 12, 1973, COMMUNIST HARASS-MENT OF THE TONLE CHAM POSITION ASSUMED SERIOUS PROPORTIONS. SINCE THAT DATE, THE COMMUNISTS HAVE LAUNCHED SIX GROUND ATTACKS AND 31 ATTACKS BY FIRE, TOTTALLING MORE THAN 1600 ROUNDS OF MIXED 60 MM, 82 MM, 120 MM MORTAR, 105 MM, AND 155 MM ARTILLERY. THE GVN RANGER FORCE DEFENDING THE POSITION HAS SUFFERED SIGNIFI-CANT CASUALTIES. HELICOPTERS ATTEMPTING TO EVACUATE THE WOUNDED HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO HOSTILE FIRE. IT HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO RESUPPLY THE POST.

4. THE RACH BAP POSITION HAS BEEN CONTINUOUSLY OCCUPIED BY GVN UNITS FOR MANY YEARS, AS IT OCCUPIES A KEY POSITION ON THE NORTHERN EDGES OF THE MAIN INFILTRATION ROUTE INTO SAIGON. AT THE TIME OF THE CEASE- FIRE ON JANUARY 28, 1973, IT WAS OCCUPIED BY A GVN REGIONAL FORCE UNIT. SINCE MARCH 11, 1973, RACH BAP HAS RECEIVED 25 AT-TACKS BY FIRE, OF GROWING INTENSITY, REACHING UP TO 430 ROUNDS PER DAY OF MIXED MORTAR AND ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT. IT HAS WITHSTOOD TWO GROUND ATTACKS, DURING WHICH THE DEFENDING GVN FORCE SUFF-ERED CONSIDERABLE CASUALTIES. AS I
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